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SUBJECT: SUDANESE CENSUS MAY BE DELAYED FROM FEBRUARY TO MARCH
(WITHOUT AFFECTING ELECTIONS DATE)

¶1. USAID and emboffs spoke November 19 with Herbert B. Kande, Chief Technical Advisor with the UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Population Activities) office in Khartoum. Kande confirmed that the UNFPA, which is advising both the national government's and the GOSS's census bureaus on the upcoming census, may be postponed until March or perhaps even April. Planning for the census has been hampered by delays in printing the census questionnaires, in the mapping process, and funding delays by the national government. As a result, the UNFPA does not consider the February date to be feasible, with a date in March much more realistic.

¶2. Kende said the UNFPA is to meet in Juba on Friday, November 23 with Issiah Chol Aruai, director of the GOSS's South Sudan Commission on Census and Statistics, where a decision on postponement is expected. Kende confirmed that UNFPA is recommending to the two census bureaus that enumeration be postponed until March or perhaps even April. However, emboffs pressed for the March date. Embassy Khartoum considers March to be the "drop-dead date," because the rains in Southern Sudan can begin as early as April. Were the census pushed beyond March, rainy season conditions could put a halt to carrying out the census, which would probably mean postponing the 2009 elections.

¶3. COMMENT: We will continue to take every opportunity to push for the March date which is very close to the last possible date for a census with zero margin for error. Postponing the census beyond that would probably impact on the 2009 presidential election date, which would be a serious blow to CPA implementation and could contribute to instability in relations between the North and South.

FERNANDEZ